

Seasonal Eating
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Chili for Chilly Weather
October 2023

When the weather starts to cool down for fall, the dish that comes to mind is chili. This is a great comfort food for everyday meals, game day parties or Halloween gatherings. Everyone has a special chili recipe that is their favorite. For me, my favorite is White Chicken Chili.

There is something so comforting, filling and satisfying about a bowl of creamy, well-seasoned, slightly spicy broth filled with beans, chicken, chilies and vegetables. Although I like red tomato-based chili as well, the white version is less acidic and often less spicy.

I think one of the keys to a good white chicken chili is green chilies. These add that characteristic flavor with a little heat and acid that makes just a bowl of white bean soup into white chili. Another key is some kind of creaminess to the broth. This can be accomplished in different ways. For some recipes, cream is added, others call for cream soups, some for sour cream and others use cheese. In this version I use a can of cream of chicken soup as well as a container of cheesy queso dip. You can get the queso in original (no heat), mild or hot depending on your affinity for heat. My personal favorite is mild since I do like a little heat.



Beans are another essential to white chicken chili. I used cannellini beans which are white kidney beans. You could also use great northern or navy beans, which are smaller. I also used canned beans for convenience, but you could cook them from dried beans or use leftover beans.

This does make a big pot of chili that will serve 8-10. The good thing is that the leftovers are just as good as the day it is made. For safety, be sure to cool the leftovers quickly. It will take a big pot a while to cool down, so pour it into a shallower container to cool down and store in the refrigerator.

So whether you need something to feed the gang watching football or a Friday night family dinner, White Chicken Chili is a great casual meal for fall and winter. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

White Chicken Chili

- 2 cups water
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 teaspoons dried oregano, divided
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided
- 2 large, boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1/2 large onion, chopped

3 ribs celery, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
2 tablespoons butter
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 cups chicken broth
1 (10 1/2-ounce) can cream of chicken soup
2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, undrained
1 (7-ounce) can chopped mild green chilies, undrained
1 (16-ounce) container mild queso cheese dip
Sliced green onion and chopped cilantro for garnish, optional

In a large Dutch oven, add water, bay leaves, 1 teaspoon dried oregano, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and chicken breasts. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Cover and cook until tender, about 1 - 1 1/2 hours. Shred the chicken and pour into a large bowl and set aside. In the pot, melt the butter and add onion, celery and carrot. Sauté until tender. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons dried oregano, 1 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and the cumin. Sauté for a minute and then add chicken broth, cream of chicken soup, beans and chilies. Simmer about 30 minutes more. Add queso cheese, stirring until melted. Serve garnished with green onions and cilantro along with tortilla or corn chips.